National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

The post-antibiotic apocalypse and the "war on superbugs": Catastrophe discourse in microbiology, its rhetorical form and political function

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Abstract:

Discourses evoking an antibiotic apocalypse and a war on superbugs are emerging just at a time when so-called "catastrophe discourses" are undergoing critical and reflexive scrutiny in the context of global warming and climate change. This article combines insights from social science research into climate change discourses with applied metaphor research based on recent advances in cognitive linguistics, especially with relation to "discourse metaphors." It traces the emergence of a new apocalyptic discourse in microbiology and health care, examines its rhetorical and political function and discusses its advantages and disadvantages. It contains a reply by the author of the central discourse metaphor, "the post-antibiotic apocalypse," examined in the article.

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Resource Description

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Public

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event, Temperature

Temperature: Fluctuations

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location: ☒

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified

Health Impact: ☒

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

General Health Impact

Resource Type: ☒

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article, Review

Timescale: ☒

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified